

Salvation in *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*,
and *Paradise Regained*

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Introduction

John Milton organizes his thoughts on salvation in his last great works *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, and *Paradise Regained*. These three works show God's Truth, human nature, the infinite love of Jesus the Savior, the devil's influence, and human madness. They mean people can be saved by faith. Milton is successful in his attempt to "assert Eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men" (I. 24-26) because some poets inherit thoughts from him and people can easily understand God's ways by reading their works. When we read these works, we are shocked by the fragility of human life. Milton, however, indicates that there is life ahead. As weak human beings overcome temptation, they are able to spend a more joyful and happy life. Moreover, Milton teaches us through his works that it is difficult for human beings to overcome "the fall," and that the fall creates a chain of sorrows, but he shows us human beings can overcome their difficulties.

Then, where do Milton's thoughts of life come from? They come from God and Jesus. These works have God's and Jesus' light and love, and show human beings the Truth. God gives human beings life. God gives food and clothes even to people who do not believe in God. In *Paradise Lost*, while Adam and Eve are in darkness because of not believing in God, God continues watching over them. In this poem, God also says that anyone who believes in Him is saved. The word salvation comes up many times in his works. However, he does not specifically show what salvation is. For example, God in *Paradise Lost* says as follows.

Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will,
Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
Freely vouchsafed; (P.L. III 173-175)

It is difficult to understand "salvation" because it is not specifically described in Milton's works. Moreover, it differs case by case. However, a closer look at Milton's works and the Apostle Paul's letters will reveal what "salvation" is. For these reasons, this paper will demonstrate what salvation is through examining *Paradise Regained* and Bible. In the first chapter, I will discuss salvation by examining Adam and Eve's regeneration. In the second chapter, I will discuss salvation by examining Samson's regeneration. In the third chapter,

I will ascertain Jesus' nature by observing his thoughts and life. In the fourth chapter, I will specifically explain what salvation is.

Does salvation actually exist in this world? Human desire is never satisfied, and competing human desires are created. The conflict between humans emerges in different ways. However, is there a true happiness in this conflict? As time passes by, there are more and more things to desire. And as they grow in number, they will tempt people making it increasingly. If they become exposed, people will watch them, and it is difficult for them to understand God's and Jesus' nature. So, people do not have confidence in God and the salvation. If there is salvation present in this world, why have we seen an increase of conflicts and not a decrease? These are the key issues and questions in my approach to the essence of salvation according to Christianity.

1. Adam and Eve

In this chapter, I will discuss salvation by observing Adam's and Eve's redemption.

God creates Adam and Eve. They wear a veil of innocence, and do not appear unclean. They know God, and pray to Him. However, they have less power of reason, and are mentally young. When people are innocent, all things look fresh and beautiful. They are not able to doubt something, and accept everything because of their limited knowledge. In the same way, they easily accept and believe in God. However, innocent people are also likely to make a mistake because they have no solid belief. Adam and Eve yield to the temptation of sweet words because they are innocent. In this innocent state, they are able to believe God's words without doubt.

Lowly they bowed adoring, and began
 Their orisons, each morning duly paid
 In various style, for neither various style
 Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
 Their Maker (P.L. V 144-148)

Adam and Eve break God's only law, and eat the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve gained the knowledge of sin. People understand doubt by having knowledge. When people doubt God, they have a delusion that they can live by their own power. They are not able to see their future, and live by using only their heart because they have limited knowledge. By being drowned in desire, their sorrow increases. They do not admit their own fault, but see the fault of others. Being separated from God, men tend to develop egoism stemming from their guilt. So, weak human beings are easily lured. People love themselves, so they are not considerate of others. Therefore, the human heart is unreliable, and it easily yields to temptation.

Love was not in their looks, either to God
 Or to each other, but apparent guilt,
 And shame, and perturbation, and despair,
 Anger, and obstinacy, and hate, and guile. (P.L. X 111-114)

People can realize their own finiteness by thoughtful introspection. Realizing that human beings are helpless can create hopelessness. However, at the same time, they can know of God's greatness, and can come to a realization that human beings are loved by God, and understand the depth of his love. Adam and Eve have fallen into Depravity and mourn their current condition. Being tormented by their conscience they attempt to reflect on what happened. Their minds keep wandering in the darkness. Although darkness of mind is sad and heavy to human beings, they can see God's light by overcoming the darkness. And, as they finally understand that God is light, and warmly keeps watching over them, Adam and Eve become rational beings, and do not easily yield to temptation any more.

Adam and Eve are important, for they are human parents. That is why God needs to train them as a model for humanity. God reveals the Truth to them by using light. So, they know God's mercy, understand things around them by using their soul, and can choose a better path. When they leave Eden, they have been thoroughly prepared. As they wipe their tears, they grasp their hands, and slowly go out Eden. So, we understand from this that they sincerely regret their own sin and decide to accept the punishment. My previous paper states about Eve knowing the Truth as follows.

God had to train human mother for always seeing the truth through eyes of soul, even when Eve went to the wilderness, and encountered various sufferings and temptation. Eve is led to the Providence, grasps Adam's hand, enters the inner Paradise, and wipes "some natural tears," feels confident to become a human mother, and leaves Eden.¹

Adam and Eve become wiser by Providence. They have peace in their mind by knowing God's salvation. However, have they actually received salvation? They experienced God by the conviction in their soul when they shed tears, and feel regret. It is salvation for Adam and Eve. However, the destiny of leaving Eden and wandering the wilderness awaits them. Moreover, the "solitary way" is before them. If perfect salvation had indeed visited them, this would not have awaited them. In their current state, they don't feel saved and their lives are not filled with pleasure, but instead solitude. That is to say, a type of salvation visits them, but this salvation is obscure and imperfect.

The world was all before them, where to choose

Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
 They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
 Through Eden took their solitary way. (P.L. XII 646-649)

It is same throughout the Old Testament story. The Old Testament depicts murder, lust, infamy, death, and war, etc. in this world. Adam and Eve lead by Providence know the Truth, and become humanity's model. However, Providence does not spread out over their offspring. Even their child, Cain commits murder which is a mortal sin. God's plans are mysterious, and human beings are unable to comprehend Providence.

Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* repent and return to God, but their future is set to be in the wilderness and the "solitary way," far from perfect, clear salvation. So, people before Jesus can have salvation, yet, it is obscure, incomprehensible and not fully realized.

2. Samson

In this chapter, I will discuss salvation by observing Samson's redemption.

The judge Samson is captured by the Philistines, blinded, and put in prison. He recalls his former glory, and laments in prison. Samson, the chosen Judge by God, was the strongest man in the world, and ruled over Israel. The Judge was the highest authority in Israel. However, did Samson have a glorious past indeed? Samson "in glory" kills thirty people for taking off their clothes, parts from his girlfriend, burns every Philistines wheat field, kills one thousand people with an ass' bone, and consorts with prostitutes. Samson is stirred and becomes a hero for saving Israel. He shares the sin of greed with everybody, which puts him in the category of an ordinary person.

When we read *Samson Agonistes*, we understand that its structure resembles that of *Paradise Lost*. In *Paradise Lost*, Eve is tempted by the serpent, Adam is tempted by Eve, and they are separated from God. Same as Samson, he is tempted by Delilah's sweet words, and then separated from God. Therefore, his sight and mind are closed in darkness. As God is light, people are closed in darkness by leaving God. Moreover, Samson loses his power by being his hair shaved, and becomes an ordinary person. So, we can know that he has a flawed moral character.

Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
 O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
 Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
 Without all hope of day ! (Sam 79-82)

Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost* shed tears, regret, and deeply understand God. Samson is also awakened by deep reflection and regret, and he begins to feel his mission. People

can feel more of life when they are regenerated. The process of regeneration causes people to understand that God gives humans life. This in turn, causes them to want to live for God. It can sometimes connect to a mission. Samson knows God's mind, and begins to sense his mission. The mission is to kill the Philistines by exchanging his life and avenge for Israel. In the end he finally fulfills his mission.

Be of good courage, I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts. (Sam. 1381-1383)

Samson seems to contribute to Israel by this heroism. Theologians also believe that Samson was finally able to attain Christian regeneration and become a hero who has a mission. Moreover, they state that Samson foreshadows Christ. But does he foreshadow Christ? Samson is drowned in his sin, and yields to temptation. Moreover, he kills people and himself. Suicide is considered to be a sin. Since people can contribute something for the world if they live, taking one's life without fulfilling human duty is dishonoring to God. On the other hand, Jesus does not yield to temptation and is killed without sin by others. In view of this, Samson does not seem to foreshadow Jesus. For example, I have quoted Iinuma Marikos' paper as follows.

We are evidently able to see Jesus' resurrection. Samson violently laments because he falls from the status of glory to the position of slave. Samson thought he was in glory, but he was not. He realizes that he was not in glory, chooses the way of shame, is able to fly high, and attains high position of glory.²

Then, why is Samson considered to be a hero? Since God chooses Samson as a Judge in the Bible. Moreover, Samson's father Manoa in *Samson Agonistes* says that Samson's last deeds are heroic. Samson's heroism is doubtful because Manoa is human.

Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
A life heroic, on his enemies
Fully revenged, hath left them years of mourning (Sam 1709-1712)

Although Samson is called a hero, his deeds are not heroic. He is not a hero because he has killed people. The relatives of his victims feel sad and angry, and it becomes a chain of sorrows. It is never good to kill people created by God. Albert Schweitzer's "the awe of life" accurately describes God's Truth. God cherishes every life. But God chooses Samson

as a Judge and as a savior. So, he is a savior. However, he is stained with desire, and brings sorrow to people. That is to say, Samson brings “salvation” to people, but this salvation is not complete.

3. Jesus

In this chapter, I will discuss Jesus by observing his thoughts and deeds.

Paradise Lost and *Paradise Regained* give a detailed description of Jesus. *Paradise Lost* describes that Jesus will save human beings and will destroy Satan. *Paradise Regained* describes Jesus’ trial before proving Truth to people. We can know Jesus’ nature by observing these two works.

The accumulated experience of humans is revealed by their appearance. In the same way, God’s brightness coming from Jesus’ body reveals Jesus’ mind that is filled with love and grace.

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
Most glorious, in him all his Father shone
Substantially expressed, and in his face
Divine compassion visibly appeared,
Love without end, and without measure grace (P.L. III 138-142)

Next, Jesus’ deeds are described in *Paradise Lost*, and he feels compassion for Adam and Eve, dresses them. From this, we can see the command to “love your enemy.” Moreover, Jesus is described to have personally washed his servant’s feet. From this, we can see the command to “serve the lowest one.” So, we can see what kind of love this is. Love keeps giving even when it is hard. This deed is very difficult, considering how human beings have desire and pride. Love is to give up these things, and to continually keep giving them up. Love heals people, and has the power to make them happy. Moreover, love enables people to walk the good path. Jesus is love, and shows that love excels in everything.

As when he washed his servants’ feet, so now
As father of his family he clad
Their nakedness with skins of beasts, or slain,
Or as the snake with youthful coat repaid;
And thought not much to clothe his enemies: (P.L. X 215-219)

When we read *Paradise Regained*, we can see Jesus’ thoughts. He has a heroic task before being crucified. In the Bible, Jesus states “every thing that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him.” Jesus is certainly a hero. When he suf-

fered he sweated blood, and kept living for others and for God. Samson is stained with human sin, but is called a hero for his suicide. On the other hand, Jesus has no sin, and was killed by others. Comparing this, we are able to understand that Samson is not a hero, but Jesus is the real hero.

Jesus deeply understands that human beings are weak creatures and likely to yield to temptation. However, Jesus does not want people to give in to temptation. From this, Jesus hates sin.

victorious deeds
 Flamed in my heart, heroic acts, one while
 To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke,
 Then to subdue and quell o'er all the earth
 Brute violence and proud tyrannic pow'r,
 Till truth were freed, and equity restored: (P.R. I 215–220)

People lost Paradise because of Adam and Eve's sin. People wander the earth, and keep looking for paradise. In the process, conflict emerges which can escalate into murder. This human desire has spread throughout the world. Then, Jesus is born. Jesus shows people Paradise. People are able to return to Paradise by believing in Him, because Jesus is the mediator between God and man. People can't find Paradise again by their own power. However, Jesus shows people the perfect salvation. Perfect salvation is the Paradise for human beings.

For though that seat of earthly bliss be failed,
 A fairer Paradise is founded now
 For Adam and his chosen sons, whom thou
 A Saviour art come down to re-install. (P.R. IV 612–615)

People cannot overcome every temptation. Human beings are weak creatures, and have madness they cannot overcome on their own. So, they have to depend on others. Jesus is needed. Jesus refuses the temptations of ease, comfort, and liberation of Israel. Instead, he perfectly destroyed Satan's power, which is impossible for human beings. In this, Jesus demonstrates that he is the Son of God.

Jesus reveals the perfect salvation, so people throw themselves upon this salvation. People are saved and given entry into Paradise by listening to God and Jesus. But, people can't understand God's words if they do not seek Him. That is to say, a willing heart and God's power are needed.

4 . Salvation

In this chapter, I will discuss what salvation is.

The Bible states that people are saved by believing in Jesus, but it is difficult to understand. The teachings of church are that people should believe in Jesus, and live along Jesus' way. However, it is difficult to understand salvation. History did not reveal the essence of salvation. Roger Haight states this as follows.

Yet despite this centrality and importance, the Church has never formulated a definition of salvation nor provided a universally accepted conception. This is not necessarily something negative, but it still leaves us with pluralism in the domain of the theology of salvation, the meaning of which remains open and fluid. Salvation is also elusive.³

Then, I would like to ascertain what salvation is. Human beings have sin they can't overcome by themselves. It is also madness in them. They must depend upon others because they can't overcome it by their own power, so, they need God. God sends Jesus to earth to reveal salvation. People need salvation when they suffer. Since Jesus is servant of the world, Jesus can provide help for suffering people. Jesus can't live in people's mind if they do not know who Jesus is. Therefore, the first step of salvation is to know Jesus.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge— that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Ephesians. 3 :17-19)

After knowing Jesus, the next step is choice. Jesus' words are real or they're not. Faith has a long time to form in the human mind. Since God is deeply concerned for people. The Person can have confidence in Jesus as the Savior by believing and seeking him. Jesus' words have love and power which enable people to choose good ways, and, to have confidence that never moves. That is to say, the person realizes that he is released from the fetters of the world, and saved when he believes in God and Jesus. The person is saved from the burden he always had, and feels joy and pleasure.

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed be-

forehand unpunished- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Romans. 3 :25-26)

The Apostle Paul states the next step of faith. It is to live in love. Why does the deed of love relate to salvation? To keep believing Jesus is to have confidence in Jesus as the Savior. The person who has had his burden taken away feels joy and pleasure. This being so, the person wants to please God and Jesus. The person desires what God and Jesus want. The believer knows that the gift is to live in love, and to live for God and Jesus. Therefore, salvation closely relates to living in love. The saved person truly wants to live in love.

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ... In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, James. 2 : 14,17)

The true believer knows who Jesus is, and properly listens to his words. God and Jesus' life live in the human soul. As the time passes by, the person has confidence in God and Jesus as the Savior. The person is filled with pleasure, and wants to live in love. The deeds of love are the deeds Jesus did in his life. It was to show God's Truth to people, give a hand to suffering people, and bring love to the world, etc.

After revealing the gospel, human desire still spreads out in this world. And, we do not easily know Jesus and salvation, even when societies have developed into civilizations. It is difficult for people to search their heart by listening to God's words when the temptation increases. However, there is surely salvation. Jesus' essence never changes even though the days and society change. The seeming lack of evidence of the existence of salvation in this world is that faith is the problem of the individual. When salvation is understood in a group, the salvation does not seem to come. But, God is Truth as if society is any conditions. People can be given salvation by believing and seeking God. Moreover, the saved person knows that the salvation is motivated by love. If people can't feel salvation, society has no love.

Conclusion

Milton describes Samson is a hero, but he is a sinful person. In the Bible, Samson was a Judge, who brought salvation to people, but the salvation was obscure and incomplete.

This paper proposes Jesus as the real Savior. Jesus shows that love changes human minds, and makes them happy. Salvation is described in the Old Testament, but it is obscure and imperfect. On the other hand, salvation is clear and perfect in Jesus.

We can tell Milton's idea salvation is Paradise from *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, and *Paradise Regained*. If we get to Paradise, we can find out our hope. Human beings have madness they cannot overcome by their own power, so, they need Jesus. Jesus heals people's mind, and releases them from suffering. However, this healing does not come if they do not know Jesus. A person has confidence by listening to God's words, and is filled with pleasure. The saved person realizes through Jesus that salvation is love. Namely, salvation is "to have confidence in God as the savior" and "to live in love."

Jesus shows human beings the perfect salvation. But the salvation does not always seem to come to this world because conflicts are never decreasing. The cause is people thinking they can be saved in a group. Just being a member of Christian is not guaranteed to enter Paradise. Salvation occurs not "group salvation" but between God and an individual.

As time passes by, people want to live by their own power because they do not have confidence in God and salvation. So, the conflict continues and further hurts people because human beings love themselves. However, God is the eternal being, and salvation and love never change as society changes. Happiness comes to the place where there is love.

Is an individual's salvation irrelevant to society? The answer is that an individual's salvation surely relates to society. If a person is saved by listening to God's words and having confidence in God as the Savior increases more, this world would surely change to become more beautiful and comfortable.

Notes

1. Kumagai Yusuke. 251頁.
2. This is my translation.
飯沼万里子. 26頁.
3. Haight, Roger. 225頁.

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